2026 Vital Community Grants: Building Equitable Impact

Vital Community Grants are the Community Foundation's small grants for local charities. These grants address immediate community needs, strengthen the non-profit sector, and help build a vital community for everyone.

This year's theme, **Building Equitable Impact**, will prioritize grants to charities undertaking equity related initiatives such as improving accessibility, building community spaces that are welcoming, or creating a sense of belonging for equity deserving groups through their programs.

Participatory Grant Making

We expect up to eight eligible applicants will be invited to participate in a participatory grantmaking process that will meet as a granting circle over two half-day sessions, with a third session if necessary.

Additionally, those invited to participate in the granting circle will convene in the spring of 2027 to report back to each other on progress, successes, and lessons learned.

This year the Vital Community Grants will be a two-year commitment, as such, granting circle members will convene again in late 2027 or early 2028 to share needs and allocate a second round of funding.

This process requires time, energy, a willingness to listen and learn from others and the ability to participate collaboratively with diverse community partners.

Size of Grant

Over the past three years, the average Vital Community Grant was $8,560. Given the nature of participatory grantmaking, the amounts granted this year may vary according to the decision of the granting circle participants themselves. Grants are unrestricted and not project-specific although applicants may choose to focus their application on a particular program.

All charities participating in the granting circle will be guaranteed a grant of $1,000.

Eligibility

Applicants must meet all of the eligibility criteria in order to apply:

1. Organizations must be registered charities operating within and providing services to people in the City and/or County of Peterborough, Hiawatha First Nation or Curve Lake First Nation. Status as a "qualified donee" in good standing will be verified through the CRA website as part of the application process. Organizations that are not qualified donees must contact the Community Foundation before applying.

Foundations, municipalities or other government bodies, and faith-based organizations are not eligible for Vital Community Grants 2026.

2. Applicants must demonstrate a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion work. The stage of action organizations are in their EDI journey does not affect their eligibility engaging in the granting circle. However, a commitment to learning and engagement towards equity principles should be reflected in your organization's answers.

3. Organizations must have an annual operating revenue of less than $1 million in the last financial year for which records are publicly available on CRA's List of Charities. Vital Community Grants are the Foundation's small grants program so, for greater grant impact, we are prioritizing organizations with smaller budgets.

4. Organizations must provide a living wage to all employees over 18 years of age and be up-to-date on payroll commitments.

5. Applicant organizations must be willing to participate in a granting circle to determine the priorities and allocation of the available funds. This is a commitment of time and energy as participants will need to read and consider applications from other organizations, listen to other participants, and discuss and decide on options for the allocation of funds.
A representative of your organization must be available on the scheduled dates of: October 26, November 2, with a third date of November 9 if necessary.

6. Organizations that discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disabilities, age, national origin, or any protected classes are not eligible for Vital Community Grants.

How to Apply

Expressions of interest are only accepted through the Foundation's online portal. If you do not already have an account, **you can set up your login here**.

Please find a tutorial to GLM tutorial **here**.

Expressions of interest must be submitted by **October 13th at 5 pm**

Answers provided in the expression of interest may be shared with other applicants, the Foundation's board, donors and the broader community.

Please contact the Community Foundation at simal.iftikhar@cfgp.ca if you need any assistance or accommodations.

Funding Priority

Priority will be given to organizations, programs and projects serving and led by equity-deserving groups. These groups are often underfunded and may include Indigenous Peoples, 2SLGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and racialized people.

Invitation to Participate

Each expression of interest will be carefully screened in relation to the eligibility criteria by Community Foundation staff and a peer review committee. Applicants will have an update on their status by October 19, 2026.

Up to 8 successful applicants will be invited to participate in granting circles which will be held on October 26, November 2, and, if necessary, November 9.

All applications will be shared and read by other members of the granting circle.

Applications

Funding assessment criteria will be decided by the participants of the granting circle and applications will be made orally within the granting circle. Recommendations made by the granting circle will go to the Board of Directors of the Community Foundation, with grant announcements being made in November.